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## Nesting Solitaires

Finding the nest of a Townsend Solitaire is not a rare experience, as the files of the "Condor" can show; nevertheless the sight of a Solitaire feeding its nestlings in the solitude of the high mountains marked my day with a bright red letter. My field notes, however, are mostly concerned with their behavior as ground-nesting birds, but the notes are too few unfortunately to lead to any conclusions.

The red-letter day was July 27, 1931; and the place, Yosemite National Park at an elevation of about 8,500 feet. The Solitaires had staked their territory on a steep, rocky slope above a turbulent stream. A few junipers offered flycatching stations, and earlier, no doubt, singing posts. The discovery of the nest was accidental. I had stepped aside from the trail to let a string of pack animals pass, and was sitting on the ground with my back against a projecting ledge of granite. Suddenly a bird that was flying up-slope toward me swerved sharply, barely six paces in front of me, and took refuge in a juniper some sixty feet away. Immediately it gave vent to excited notes that were harsh and nasal but not loud. An insect in its bill was tell-tale. After assuring myself that I had not sat upon the nest, I endeavored to become a part of the landscape, to no avail. After a little while the vehemently protesting *chaa's* changed to soft, bluebird-like notes of seemingly watchful alarm, each note accompanied by a thrush-like flicking of wings. Deciding I must be too near the nest, I slowly removed myself to a distance of fifty feet or more, but the solicitous parent would take no risks. Flying from tree to tree, still uttering alarm notes, it finally disappeared up the slope.

It was half an hour before I again saw a Solitaire. It came floating down the slope, tilting a little on slightly uplifted wings. With swallow-like grace it lit on the tip-top branch of the juniper. A little later its mate came and with fluttering wings approached it. For a moment they touched bills, and then each went about its business of catching insects on the wing. Soon one of them flew to a low bush near the ledge I had been resting against and, after a careful and prolonged survey of the landscape (I was completely hidden more than a hundred feet away), slipped down to its nest and fed its young. Not until the other bird had taken its turn at feeding and had flown off did I come out from my hiding place to examine the nest. There it was on the ground under the shelving ledge of granite, hardly six feet from where I had been sitting. Two well-feathered, almost completely bedappled young Solitaires crouched low in their cupped nest of dry grasses. During the long hour I watched them and photographed them they held a "freeze," hardly moving more than an eyelid even when I gently poked them with my finger. The nest itself was typical enough. Spread out loosely in front of the rather flimsy cup of grasses was the characteristic "apron" of sticks,—in this case mostly dead twigs of the dwarf manzanita of the region. Some of the sticks were a foot long, crooked, and thicker than a pencil, too heavy and clumsy, one would think, for the small bill of a slender Solitaire to pick up and carry.

While I was taking my last picture the parents returned in swift flight. Their coming was accompanied by a humming, strumming sound that I could attribute only to the birds themselves. They darted at me, uttering the harsh notes already described. Several times one came within arm's length of my offending head. Once drooping of wings suggested cripple-bird simulation. But before I finished taking the picture, before I gave the distressed parents all my attention, they were gone. It had been a brief, although vigorous, display of solicitude. But another such golden opportunity to study their nest-protection reactions was not given me. In half an hour, before the birds came back again, I had to go on my way. Emily Smith, Los Gatos. October 28, 1931.



### Cliff Swallows at Benicia

A marked increase in the number of Cliff Swallows nesting on the Benicia Arsenal grounds was noted by observers this season. This property belonging to the War Department covers 450 acres on which there are 85 buildings. Several of the buildings which heretofore had not harbored nests of the Cliff Swallows were tenanted by these birds, and there was an increase in the number of nests under the roofs of buildings which have been favored annually by these birds.

A dozen pair which built their mud enclosures below the roof of the office porch—the first time this building had been selected as a nesting site—were eventually driven away by the janitor, who foresaw much labor in cleaning up after them. After breaking up their nests a few times before they were completed, he swabbed with oil the surface of the boards to which the nests had been attached. This resulted in discouraging them from using this particular building for their nests.

None of the other nesting locations chosen by the swallows on the arsenal grounds were molested, and continued increase is hoped for. Emerson A. Stoner, Benicia, California. September 23, 1931.



### Feeding Activities of a Pair of Wood Pewees

A big old fox tail pine on the mountain side at an altitude of ten thousand feet provided a protected branch for the nesting site of a pair of Wood Pewees. When I found the nest the parent birds were perched one above the other in plain sight on dead limbs. The bird above flew out to catch insects twenty-five times in twenty-five minutes, the bird perched below fifty times in twenty-five minutes. It was twenty-five minutes before either bird visited the nest. Then the lower one visited it three times in fifteen minutes and continued to visit it. Which was the father and which the mother bird? I leave it to you to decide. Cornelia C. Pringle, San Francisco. September 16, 1931.



**Saturday Field Trip:** Our November Saturday afternoon trip was taken on the 14th, to Mountain View Cemetery, Oakland, with Brighton C. Cain as leader.

The day was overcast and rain threatened but it was not until our party of eight members and two guests had started for home that it actually rained.

Twenty birds were observed as follows: Red-tailed and Desert Sparrow Hawks; California Quail; Red-shafted Flicker; Black Phoebe; California Jay; Bush-tit; Vigors Wren; Robin; Dwarf Hermit Thrush; Western Bluebird; Ruby-crowned Kinglet; Audubon Warbler; Spotted and Brown Towhees; Savannah Sparrow; Junco; Golden-crowned, Nuttall and Song Sparrows.

Laura A. Stephens, historian.

**November Field Trip** was taken on Sunday, the 15th, to Marin County. A cold, clear day, with a brisk north wind, following a night of pouring rain, did not prevent the party of twenty-two members and seven guests from obtaining a large list of species, some of which were represented by large numbers of individuals.

An experiment in dividing the party into two groups proved a success. One group started from Ross and went to Fairfax. The other group started from Fairfax and went to Ross.

Ross continues to be favored by a fair sized bird population, no fewer than thirty-four species being noted there.

Golden-crowned Kinglets, more abundant than usual, were feeding lower down in the trees. Ruby-crowned Kinglets, present in the usual numbers, were found in one location feeding on the ground. A Townsend Warbler feeding among the outer branches of a *Chamaecyparis* Tree presented a striking picture.

An excellent opportunity was had to compare Audubon with Myrtle Warblers. A Creeper alighting on a Redwood tree only a few feet from our group, "froze" and gave us a demonstration of protective coloration.

While the group was studying a flock of Lark Sparrows feeding on a hillside on the edge of Bon Tempe Meadow, a Marsh Hawk swooped down, seized a Sparrow, sailed a short distance, alighted on the ground and devoured its prey. The rusty brown color on the underparts of this hawk indicated that it was an immature bird. Closer investigation of the remains of its prey proved them to be those of a Lark Sparrow.

Several of our party went to Lansdale and found the White-throated Sparrow which had been previously reported by Mrs. Otis H. Smith.

The outstanding discovery of the day was made by Gordon Bolander. It was a Spotted Owl perched in a small coast redwood tree close to the road down from Lagunitas Lake. After the group had looked at it for some time Mr. Cain, who knows a few apparently very harsh words of the Spotted Owl's language, spoke to him in loud and vicious tones. Mr. Owl evidently understood and became visibly agitated, giving us several additional views much to our delight.

A total of seventy-one species were observed as follows: On Richardson's Bay and marshes: Eared and Western Grebes; Brown Pelican; Farallon Cormorant; Great Blue Heron; Pintail and Canvas-back Ducks; White-winged and Surf Scoters; Ruddy Duck; American Coot; Killdeer; Western Sandpiper; Western and California Gulls; American Crow.

#### Elsewhere:

Pied-billed Grebe	Red-breasted Sapsucker	Pipit
Canvas-back Duck	Downy Woodpecker	Cedar Waxwing
Lesser Scaup	Say Phoebe	Myrtle Warbler
Ring-necked Duck	Black Phoebe	Audubon Warbler
Ruddy Duck	Steller Jay	Townsend Warbler
Turkey Vulture	California Jay	Meadowlark
Sharp-shinned Hawk	Crow	Brewer Blackbird
Cooper Hawk	Chickadee	Purple Finch
Red-tailed Hawk	Plain Titmouse	Linnet
Marsh Hawk	Bush-tit	Pine Siskin
Sparrow Hawk	Brown Creeper	Green-backed Goldfinch
California Quail	Wren-tit	Spotted Towhee
Coot	Winter Wren	Brown Towhee
Killdeer	Bewick Wren	Savannah Sparrow
Wilson Snipe	Robin	Lark Sparrow
Band-tailed Pigeon	Varied Thrush	Oregon Junco
Spotted Owl	Hermit Thrush	White-throated Sparrow
Belted Kingfisher	Western Bluebird	Golden-crowned Sparrow
Red-shafted Flicker	Golden-crowned Kinglet	Nuttall Sparrow
California Woodpecker	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	Song Sparrow

Chas. A. Bryant and A. B. Stephens, historians.



## Audubon Notes

**December Meeting** will be held on Thursday, the 10th, at 8 p. m., room 19, 2nd floor, Ferry Building.

The speaker of the evening will be Mr. Joseph Dixon. Subject "Another Chapter of the Life of the Trumpeter Swan."



**December Field Trip** will be taken Sunday, the 13th, to the University Campus, Berkeley. San Francisco members take 8:40 a. m. Key Route boat and Berkeley train to end of line, where party will form at 9:30 a. m.

East Bay members may reach this point by College, Telegraph, Shattuck or Grove Street cars. Bring luncheon.

In case of heavy rain the trip will be taken on Sunday the 27th. Leader Mrs. H. P. Bracelin.

A cordial invitation has been extended by Mr. and Mrs. Arthur H. Myer, to gather at their home, 25 El Camino Real, after the field trip.



**Saturday Field Trip** will be taken on the 19th to Baker's Beach, San Francisco, to study the Gulls. Take municipal car C and get off at 25th Avenue, where party will form at 1:30 p. m. Mrs. A. B. Stephens and Miss Cornelia Pringle, leaders.



**Christmas Census** will be taken on Sunday, the 20th. All those wishing to help in this work, please send name to Chas. A. Bryant, 150 Franklin Street, San Francisco, not later than December 12th, in order that arrangements may be made.

**1932 Dues.** The annual dues for the coming year of 1932 will be payable January 1st, and all members are asked to make their remittances as early as possible to the Treasurer. It is requested that all checks be made in the name of the Audubon Association of the Pacific.



**November Meeting:** The 177th regular meeting was held on November 12th, in room 19, Ferry Building, with forty members and guests present. President Brighton C. Cain presiding.

Field observations were reported as follows:

Chas. A. Bryant: Rodeo Lagoon, October 18th, two Alaska Waterthrushes; Lake Merced, October 25th, Red Phalaropes; Rodeo Lagoon, November 1st, Red Phalaropes.

Morgan Harris: Scout Camp, Oakland, November 11th, Slate-colored Junco.

Commander Parmenter: Lake Merced, October 14th, American Golden Plover; Lloyd Lake, Golden Gate Park, November 7th, three Redhead Ducks, Chain of Lakes, female Wood Duck.

Carl Smith: Sutro Forest, San Francisco, Crested Jay.

Mrs. Otis H. Smith, Lansdale, November 1st, White-throated Sparrow.

Harold Swanton: Marin County, October 18th, large flock of Band-tailed Pigeons.

Robert Taylor: Oakland, October 25th, two Mocking Birds.

The speaker of the evening was Mr. Joseph Mailliard of the California Academy of Sciences, who spoke on his "Recollections of Birds in Former Years," contrasting the great abundance of certain species with the small numbers as noted today.

## Audubon Association of the Pacific

### For the Study and the Protection of Birds

President.....	Brighton C. Cain.....	221 Thayer Bldg., Oakland
Corresponding Secretary.....	C. B. Lastreto.....	260 California St., San Francisco
Treasurer.....	Mrs. A. B. Stephens.....	1695 Filbert St., San Francisco

Monthly meeting second Thursday, 8 P. M., Room 19, Ferry Building.

Address Bulletin correspondence to Mrs. A. B. Stephens, Editor, 1695 Filbert St., San Francisco.

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Members are responsible for dues until written notice of resignation is received by Treasurer.